

## Behind the Looking Glass by orphan\_account

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**Summary:**

"Mom?" he asked, his own voice small and hopeful. The static faded, slowly but steadily, and he could make her words out more clearly.

"...nnie?" she was asking. "Hopper? Who is this?"

"It's me!" Will almost sobbed. "Mom, it's me, it's Will! I-I'm okay, but I don't know where I am, it's so dark and cold, Mommy please get me out of here-"

"Will?" his mom almost shrieked, and he could have cried in relief.

"Yes! It's me, Mom, I'm-"

"Will?" she asked again, and his heart sunk all the way down to the grime-covered floor.

Or: Stranger Things season one, as retold from Will Byers' perspective.



# 1. The Vanishing of Will Byers

## Author's Note:

Hey! I'm awful and should be working on the chaptered story I already have trouble updating instead of writing another one. In other news, the sky is blue.

Anyways! Welcome to Behind the Looking Glass, a retelling of Stranger Things from Will's point of view. This story will hopefully have eight chapters, one for each of the first season episodes.

Now, because this story will be set in the Upside Down for obvious reasons, and we know very little about it, you all are going to be inflicted with a lot of my headcanons and creative liberties. This holds true for the character of Will as well, because we don't actually have all that much canon information on what he's like.

Since the prologue scene is told from Will's point of view anyways, it's excluded from the story. Instead, the story starts right at the moment the Demogorgon appears behind Will and the camera cuts away.

Finally: Spoiler warning! Really!

Without further ado- on to the story!

There was a noise behind him, and Will stopped breathing. His throat so tight that no air could move through it even if it wanted to, though his heart was thudding painfully staccato beats against his ribs.

The lightbulb got brighter, and brighter, and brighter, and something was snarling and... *dripping* behind him, and his hands were sweaty and shaking around the barrel of the gun so badly that he doubted he could even fire it if he needed to. And slowly, very slowly, he turned

around.

The lightbulb got brighter, and brighter, and it cast the monster into stark relief, and Will could see it for the first time, and-

-it didn't have a face.

*It didn't have a face.*

It was shaped like a man, roughly, but only in the way that a hideous, blind eel that has never seen the sun resembled the green snakes that he used to chase in the backyard. Its arms and legs were too long, too bony, and its hands were topped with twisted talons. The blank, slimy grey slate where a face should have been opened, unfurled like the world's more horrific flower into five pieces studded with *teeth*.

A clawed hand closed around his neck, knifelike nails pricking his skin, and its touch was icy cold, colder than ice, colder than death.

Will went numb, from fear or from cold he couldn't say, but he couldn't feel the gun still clenched in white-knuckled hands, couldn't even twitch his arms to raise it against the monster.

Then the floor disappeared under him, and Will was falling and falling and falling and tumbling head over heels without ever moving at all.

The lightbulb blew.

No, that wasn't right. It didn't pop or spark. It was just... out, and it was dark and cold and snowing, and something was so very, *very* wrong, and the monster was nowhere to be seen.

He looked around, and felt bile rise in his stomach. He was... he didn't know where he was. It looked like he was still inside the shed, the same shelves nailed lopsidedly to the same flimsy walls, the same door creaking ominously and hanging loosely, half off its hinges, but it was all... wrong. The walls were caked with a disgusting, pulsing *something*, forming stringy webs across the ceiling and over the

windows. He moved towards the door, and something squished under his foot when he took a step.

He choked down the vomit and forced himself not to look down, and made his way to the door. A light tap with the barrel of the gun sent it swinging open loosely, and he looked around.

There were no stars. No moon. The sky was flat and ugly grey-black, and something white and weightless was spiraling easily down from the sky. It looked like snow, but when he caught a flake on his finger, it wasn't cold, and it didn't melt.

Or perhaps it was cold, and he couldn't tell, because everything there was cold. It was the same biting, invasive, numbing cold that he'd felt with the monster's claws around his neck, but it was everywhere now, sliding under his skin and digging into his bones. He shuddered involuntarily, hugging his arms to his chest and letting his chin drop down into the hollow of his collarbone.

His house stood a few feet away, empty and silent the way it never was, webbed over with the awful nameless throbbing stuff. He moved to the door slowly, hesitantly, all-too-aware of the monster's conspicuous absence, he moved across the horribly exposed yard and up the haphazard couple steps. He twisted the doorknob, ducked inside, and slammed the door closed behind him all in one quick motion.

"Jonathan?" he called, voice weak and frightened and thinking of all the Dungeons and Dragons monsters that were drawn to sound. "Mom?"

There was something fleshy and red spread across most of the wall to his right, and none of the lights would turn on, and his house was utterly empty. He ducked into his room and collapsed onto his bed, which was slightly sticky and had all the blankets missing but still carried a vague, intangible sense of safety and comfort. He pulled his knees off up against his chest and curled into himself, shaking.

A tear ran down his cheek, and he sniffled, wiping at it even as he could feel more gathering behind his eyes.

A bad dream. That's what it had to be, right? A bad dream. Because Mom had promised, she said there weren't any monsters under the bed or in the closet, and Mom wouldn't lie to him.

He'd wake up soon, and he'd have fallen asleep in Mike's basement after they'd finished the game. He'd wake up and eat Mike's mom's amazing pancakes for breakfast and his mom would call all worried because he hadn't been home and he'd say sorry and mean it but not quite and he and Mike would ride their bikes to school and meet Dustin and Lucas there. They'd get harassed by James and Troy like always and maybe the ham radio had finally arrived! And everything would be *normal*.

It had to be a bad dream.

He curled up on the blanketless bed, trying to ignore the seeping cold, and squeezed his eyes shut.

When he woke up, he'd be home.

When he woke up, he heard voices. His mom and Jonathan, sounding oddly muted like a bad television signal but still audible, though he couldn't quite make out the words. He heard his name, he thought, and he tumbled out of his bed with a start.

"Mom! Jonathan!" he shouted. "I'm here! I'm here!"

Jonathan's voice was getting closer and closer. The door swung open and Will sighed with relief, gasping sighs of happiness.

But Jonathan wasn't there, even though Will could still hear his voice, right on top of him by now, right outside the room. He could even see a flicker of movement where his brother might have been, a shadow that he wasn't casting, but Jonathan wasn't there.

The monster was.

It was *right there*, looming in the doorway and blocking the only escape. Will went stock still, muscles locking up with fright, breaths coming short and fast. The gun lay only a few feet away where he'd

discarded it before falling onto the bed, but it may as well have been a mile for all he could retrieve it.

There might be hope, though, because that horrible face that was all *mouth* and that meant it didn't have any eyes.

It couldn't *see* him.

He kept very still, and very, very silent as it prowled around the room, almost breaking and running one when he could feel its breath rasping against the back of his neck. It was so cold.

Eventually, after what seemed like a thousand years, the monster moved away, and Will could breathe again.

He couldn't keep doing this.

He needed to get home.

He needed to go back to the shed.

When he finally couldn't hear the monster's low, sticky growling anymore, Will collapsed to his hands and knees, wheezing. He didn't have asthma, but he thought that was what it might feel like, dizzy and lightheaded and not having enough air.

He knew he should go, the monster might come back, so he dragged himself to the door, one hand grabbing the rifle and gripping it like a lifeline, even though he had no idea what his dad's old .22 could possibly do against the monster, and the more he saw of it the more uncertain he grew.

He padded out onto the lawn, over grass that was brown and dead and layered with pulsing gunk. He could hear a dog barking, but it was muted and faint, the way he'd heard Mom and Jonathan's voices earlier. He looked around, but again saw nothing. No people, no dog, no monster.

The door of the shed was still hanging loosely open, and he walked inside and pulled it closed behind him with shaking fingers,

remembered fear running up and down his arms. He stood in the center, right underneath the lightbulb.

Nothing happened. No floor moving, no dizzying vertigo. He wasn't suddenly back where he was supposed to be. He was just standing in a cold, silent shed. The only noises he could hear were the rasping of his breath, the faint squelching of the pulsing *stuff* growing everywhere, the faint barking of the dog, and even fainter but growing steadily louder-

-voices. Voices that were sort of familiar, like he had heard them once upon a time, but he couldn't remember who they belonged to. They were calling his name, too.

For half a second, someone else was inside the shed. Not the monster, but a person, the edges sort of flickering but the shape clear and the heavy, angry face distinct. Chief Hopper. That was who the voice had belonged to. The others must be other cops, and the thought made something warm swell in his heart. Mom had called the cops. She knew he was missing. They would find him, and he'd be okay.

"I'm here!" he screamed. "I'm here, I'm here, Chief, I'm right here!"

There was no response, and a moment later, the chief's voice was fading out again, Will staring hopelessly at the empty place where he'd been for just a moment.

He had to let them know. He had to tell them that he was alive, that he was trapped. He had to tell them where he was... not that he knew where he was. But maybe if he described it... they'd be able to do something. Maybe. He didn't know.

He wanted to talk to his mom.

He dashed back inside and knocked the phone off its cradle for a minute before lifting it to his ear with his left hand, the gun still dangling loosely from his right. He set the rifle down and dialed his home number from memory, spinning the wheel back and forth and remembering all the times he'd called from Mike's to say he was



sleeping over.

He finished dialing and held the phone to his ear with both hands, hoping against hope that someone would pick up even though he knew the chance was slim at best. After all, he was calling the very phone he held up to his ear, but it wasn't the same phone, not really, not anymore than this strange silent house covered in alien growth was his home.

There was the click of a phone being picked up on the other end of the line, and Will's breathing kicked up a notch- but nothing came down the connection but harsh, buzzing static...

...and the echoes of a voice, such a familiar voice.

"Mom?" he asked, his own voice small and hopeful. The static faded, slowly but steadily, and he could make her words out more clearly.

"...nnie?" she was asking. "Hopper? Who is this?"

"It's me!" Will almost sobbed. "Mom, it's me, it's Will! I-I'm okay, but I don't know where I am, it's so dark and cold, Mommy please get me out of here-"

He hadn't called her Mommy since he was five years old and he couldn't care less in that moment because his frightened rambling was cut off.

"*Will?*" his mom almost shrieked, and he could have cried in relief.

"Yes! It's me, Mom, I'm-"

"Will?" she asked again, and his heart sunk all the way down to the grime-covered floor.

"It's me, it's me, Mom," he repeated hopelessly. "I'm here, Mom, but there's this *thing*-"

She made a strangled, choking noise, and he could faintly hear Jonathan's voice on the other end of the phone.

And something else- something much closer, that horrible sticky

rumbling growl coming from somewhere in the house. The phone slipped from his suddenly nerveless fingers, his mother still screaming and wailing over the speaker until her tinny voice was drowned out by the static once more.

There was a pop and a spark and the phone went silent, and Will could have screamed because he was *so close*-

The growling was so close to him, harsh and low. He turned around slowly and saw the monster moving through the kitchen. It hadn't sensed him, not yet.

He grabbed the gun and ran, away from the shadow mockery of his house and away from the monster as it screamed in frustration, and into the dark, dark woods.

## 2. The Weirdo on Maple Street

### Summary for the Chapter:

The song choice, at least, was obvious.

### Notes for the Chapter:

Hey, just in case the timing of events here doesn't quite match up with events in realtime during the show, that's not intentional but it can also be easily explained by saying that time is fucking weird in the Upside Down, like literally everything else there.

Enjoy the chapter!

Will slept in his fort.

He couldn't say why. It was hardly the safest place in town- he wasn't sure what that would be, but he could go to the police station and lock himself in one of the cells they kept for the drunks, assuming that the doors still locked properly. But he knew, without knowing how he knew, that that wouldn't stop the monster. It probably wouldn't even slow it down.

No, the fort wasn't safe in the traditional sense. It certainly wasn't *secure*. It was made of sticks and blankets, nothing that would stand up to attack. But... it wasn't *only* made of sticks and blankets. He and his mom and Jonathan had all made this fort together, his mom hand-painting the sign while Jonathan propped up the sticks. He was pretty sure his mom had taken a sheet off her own bed to cover the top, even though she never said anything.

When he was in the fort, he felt safe. He felt- no. He *knew* they were coming to get him. He knew without a doubt that they loved him, and missed him, and would never abandon him in this strange place.

He just needed to talk to them.

But for that, he would need to go back to the house, where the monster lurked.

If he couldn't get in contact, though, what would he do? Just stay here in this nightmare until the monster caught him and did... who knows what? No. No, he couldn't. He had to get home. He had to talk to his mom.

He coughed, a dry and weak sort of cough.

He made sure to go slow while leaving Castle Byers. The monster knew where his house was, and would be prowling around there, but so far as he could tell it didn't know about the fort, and he wanted to keep it that way. It was his hideaway in the normal world and it could be his hideaway here too, from things much scarier than Troy and James.

He sidled through the woods slowly, eyes darting back and forth. It seemed to take ages before he reached his house, still standing an empty, darkened shell at the top of the hill, looking as though it had been bombed. Usually by the time he got home, Jonathan was already there, and the lights were on and some new band his brother had discovered blasting loud.

He slipped inside and froze, listening intently: he didn't hear the monster. If nothing else, he had learned that in this silent world, the creature's approach was usually audible, even though in the normal world- the *real* world- it would have likely been drowned out by the ambient noise of human life.

He heard nothing but his own soft breathing and the distant, otherworldly echoes calling his name, some in voices he knew and many he didn't. They were louder in the woods, and he'd tried to find them, but it became clear after an hour of searching that they were invisible just like everyone else.

There was a new phone. It was an ugly, brownish shade of pink, and it was sitting on a chair that had been moved, the ugly green one that Will had never in his life seen move from its static spot in the corner. There was a shadow hovering on the chair, just barely there, as though cast by a ghost.

Will picked up the phone and dialed. It rang for only a moment before it was picked up.

The static buzzed for a moment, and then his Mom's voice came through again, crackling with static but clear. "Hello?"

"Mom! Mom, can you hear me? Mom, it's me!"

"Hello?" she asked again.

"Mom, please, please hear me, I don't know what else to do," he sobbed into the phone, hands clutching the receiver too tightly.

"Who is this?" she asked, voice shaking now. "Who..." she choked out. "Will?"

"I'm here, Mom, I'm here," Will promised over and over again, even though it was clear she couldn't hear him. "I'm here, I'm here."

"Will... it's me, talk to me," she pled, her voice sounding so close to breaking, and in that moment Will had never wanted anything more than to run to her and bury himself in her arms and hide from the world and the fear and the monsters.

"I am," he whispered. "I'm trying, mom, I'm trying so hard..."

"I'm here," she whimpered. "Just talk to me, tell me where you are, I can hear you, please..."

Will broke. Holding the phone to his ear like a lifeline, he collapsed into the ugly chair, chest heaving with tears. "I'm here, Mom, I'm here..."

Low, wet snarling. The monster was back, prowling around the house right outside the window, and fear flooded through Will's body. He'd been so caught up talking to his mom, he'd forgotten to *listen*, stupid stupid stupid...

"...Mom?" he tried one more time, pouring all his desperate fear into that one word, and the monster's faceless head turned towards him at the noise.

She gasped. The phone slipped from his frozen hands as he stood, slowly backing away, letting it hang loosely from the cord as her voice kept coming.

"Will!" she sobbed, the underlying static growing louder again as the monster drew closer, the front door creaking open, "Yes, it's me, it's me, where are you? Where are you, just talk to me, I-"

Then she was gone, and Will was alone with the monster.

He could still hear her crying, her sobs echoing. She was so close. The door continued to slide open, too slowly. Will inched down the hallway to his room, and the shadow of his mom followed him, still making little miserable whispering noises. He heard the monster's footsteps in the living room, so close, far too close.

He ducked into his room. His mom was still outside, and he needed to talk to her, needed to tell her, but *how*?

He could use the phone. What he did, here in this strange shadow place, still effected the real world. Maybe not the phone, but something else...

The radio drew his eye. Playing anything would be so stupid, so risky. The monster was drawn to sound, he knew that now. It would be on him in a minute. But if he could just tell her he was there...

The song choice, at least, was obvious.

He slid in the mix that Jonathan had made him, clicking to the first song and turning the volume all the way up. The monster was in the hall, now, heavy footsteps squishing on the grime-coated carpet. He had to be ready to run.

He pressed play, and as the Clash launched into the chorus, he ran for the smashed-out window, hearing the monster roar behind him. The light there flickered as he passed it before he jumped, the broken glass on one side digging into his shoulder. He started to run back into the forest, but hesitated, looked back.

The monster had stopped in the middle of the room, transfixed by something else there.

Why wasn't it chasing him?

The answer was simple.

It had found easier prey.

And as Will watched, the demogorgon began to flicker and fade. He heard his mother scream.

No.

"Leave her alone!" he shouted, voice cracking, and reached through the window to slap the play button again, to bring the thing's attention back to him. That horrible faceless head whipped around to face him instead, and he had never been so relieved to see it. "Come get me!"

The monster faded back into full view and started towards him, smashing through what was left of Will's bedroom wall, and his heart thudded in his chest as he started to run to the relative safety of the woods again. He ran along the tree line, all the way down the hill and towards town.

The monster chased after him, long loping strides that ate up the distance, and Will thought that he was about to die.

Then the thing stopped cold, and sniffed the air like a dog. It 'looked' towards one of the nicer houses right by the forest and growled, that low, hungry growl. Then it turned into the woods, ignoring Will completely, and disappeared into the undergrowth.

Will wasted no time taking the chance he had somehow been given, and running.